

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1983

---

**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness

**Title:** An act relating to providing training for park rangers employed by the state parks and recreation commission.

**Brief Description:** Providing training for park rangers employed by the state parks and recreation commission.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Finn, Appleton and Kirby.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness: 2/17/09, 2/18/09 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires that all applicants for park rangers meet minimum requirements and complete the basic law enforcement academy courses offered through the Criminal Justice Training Commission.
- Excludes park rangers from membership in the law enforcement officers' and fire fighters' (LEOFF) retirement system.

---

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Hurst, Chair; O'Brien, Vice Chair; Klippert, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Goodman and Kirby.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Pearson, Ranking Minority Member; Ross.

**Staff:** Yvonne Walker (786-7841)

**Background:**

---

*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

The State Parks and Recreation Commission is classified by statute as a "limited authority Washington law enforcement agency." The State Parks and Recreation Commission is charged, in part, with enforcing the state laws on public recreational lands. Park rangers go through a training course developed by the State Parks and Recreation Commission and are vested with police powers to enforce Washington laws.

Absent a special commission, the statute does not expressly grant park rangers permission to enforce the laws of Washington outside the territory of state recreational lands. The State Parks and Recreation Commission may adopt policies and enforce rules pertaining to the use, care, and administration of state parks and parkways. In January of 2005 the State Parks and Recreation Commission adopted a policy that requires park rangers to engage in law enforcement only within the boundaries of state park properties except: (1) when in fresh pursuit, following the commission of a felony (except such pursuit is not authorized for vehicle pursuits that involve speeds in excess of posted speed limits over significant distances); and (2) where specifically authorized by the Legislature.

A "limited authority Washington law enforcement agency" means any agency or unit or division of local or state government that has, as one of its functions, the apprehension or detection of persons committing infractions or violating traffic or specific criminal laws relating to limited subject areas. Agencies so designated include, but are not limited to, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Gambling Commission, the Department of Corrections, and the State Parks and Recreation Commission.

A "general authority Washington law enforcement agency" is defined by statute as any agency or unit or division of local or state government that has, as one of its primary functions, the detection and apprehension of persons committing infractions or violating traffic or criminal laws in general. It also means any other unit of government expressly designated by statute as such an agency. General authority law enforcement agencies include the Washington State Patrol and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Such law enforcement agencies may enforce any traffic or criminal law of the state throughout the territorial boundaries of the state.

---

### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

All applicants for park ranger positions must be citizens of the United States who can read and write the English language. All park rangers hired after the effective date of the act are deemed law enforcement personnel (peace officers) and must successfully complete the basic law enforcement academy course or the basic law enforcement equivalency certification provided by the Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC). The CJTC may charge the State Parks and Recreation Commission for the costs of providing training to park rangers.

Park rangers will retain their current status as limited authority peace officers and are specifically excluded from membership in the Washington law enforcement officers' and fire fighters' (LEOFF) retirement system.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

A provision is added to ensure that park rangers will retain their current status as limited authority peace officers despite the training they receive at the CJTC.

---

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

### **Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Washington park rangers are fully commissioned rangers just like city and county police officers. They are charged with enforcing all the state laws within park boundaries. Since the rangers are dealing with the same illegal activities as other law enforcement officers it was thought that it might be better for rangers to obtain their training through the CJTC.

During today's economic times, more and more people are using the state parks as a low cost form of recreation. This in turn means that the park rangers will be doing quasi-law enforcement activities. This bill just moves the training of park rangers from the State Parks and Recreation Commission to the CJTC.

(Neutral) Currently park rangers attend a training academy that is run in conjunction with the U.S. National Park Service and the Skagit Valley law enforcement program. Some rangers do participate in training through the academy run by the CJTC but it is based on space available only. This bill does not put them in the LEOFF retirement system and does not expand their jurisdiction.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Flinn, prime sponsor; and Don Hall, Washington Federation of State Employees.

(Neutral) Robert Ingram, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.